



Electricians Nick Bonavita, left, and Jason Andrie install triangular crystals into a panel for the Waterford crystal ball, background, on the roof of One Times Square, in New York. Hundreds of thousands of people in Times Square are expected to watch the ball drop at midnight tonight. (AP Photo/Mark Lennihan)





Officials: Times Square to be 'safest place in the world' on New Years

**COLLEEN LONG
JONATHAN LEMIRE
Associated Press**

NEW YORK (AP) — Officials sought to assure revelers this week that the New Year's Eve celebration in Times Square will be the safest place in the

Heavily armed New York City police officers with the Strategic Response Group stand guard in New York's Times Square. New York City officials sought this week to assure revelers that the New Year's Eve celebration in Times Square will be the safest place in the world.

(AP Photo/Mary Altaffer)

world — heavily secured by thousands of New York Police Department officers, including a new specialized counterterrorism unit. "Leave the worrying to the NYPD," said James O'Neill, chief of the department. "People should feel safest this New Year's Eve because we're there." Police Commissioner William Bratton said there were no credible threats to the city ahead of the holiday. Yet officials also acknowledged that there were limits to what they could do to ensure security, especially outside the tightly controlled blocks at the heart of the celebration. In much of the city, the focus will be on fast responses to any emergency rather than preventive measures like security checkpoints.

"The ability to protect everything all the time everywhere is not possible in any venue anywhere in the world," Bratton said.

About 1 million people are expected to pack the blocks around Times Square to watch the 11,875-pound (5,400-kilogram) Waterford crystal ball drop. Partygoers trying to get close enough to see and hear the musical acts that perform throughout the evening will be screened with hand-held metal detectors twice — once when they enter one of the 14 access points to the secure zone

and once when they enter pens where they must stay lest they lose their spots.

Outside that zone, revelers and vehicles can come and go as they please.

At least 6,000 patrol officers will be assigned to the festivities. Visitors will see heavily armed counterterrorism teams and bomb-sniffing dogs.

The bomb squad and a unit specializing in chemical and biological threats will sweep hotels, theaters, construction sites and parking garages. They also will patrol the Times Square subway station, and certain exits will be blocked off. The NYPD will rely on a network of thousands of closed-circuit security cameras blanketing lower Manhattan, parts of midtown Manhattan and the subway system. About 20,000 smartphones were handed out to officers this year that will allow police to quickly transmit information on potential threats.

And this year, a specialized counterterrorism unit of 500 highly trained officers will be deployed to respond to any emergency.

The unit was first formed after attacks in January at the French satirical weekly Charlie Hebdo. Bratton said the department is constantly evolving based on new information as well as the recent attacks in Paris and San Bernardino, California.

Carrie Underwood, Luke Bryan, Wiz Khalifa, Charlie Puth and Demi Lovato are among the musical guests scheduled to perform this year. When the clock strikes midnight and the ball drops, so will 1 ton of confetti — scraps of paper with well wishes for the upcoming year.

After the show, sanitation crews will get to work cleaning up from the celebration, working through the night to dispose of an estimated 50 tons of garbage, including confetti, party hats and other leftovers from the revelry. □

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The Aruba Today Newspaper announces that due to the New Year's Holiday, we will not be in circulation Friday and Saturday, January 1st and 2nd, 2016. We will be back on newsstands everywhere bright and early to serve our readers and advertisers first thing in the morning, Monday, January 4th, 2016. Until then, Happy New Year's from the Aruba Today Newspaper – the ONLY English Newspaper on Aruba!

Bill Cosby charged with drugging, sexually assaulting woman

MARYCLAIRE DALE

Associated Press

ELKINS PARK, Pa. (AP) —

Bill Cosby was arrested in the twilight of his life and career Wednesday and charged with a decade-old sex crime after a barrage of accusations from dozens of women made a mockery of his image as TV's wise and understanding Dr. Cliff Huxtable.

Holding a cane, the 78-year-old comedian walked slowly and unsteadily into court on the arms of his lawyers to answer charges he drugged and sexually assaulted a woman less than half his age at his suburban Philadelphia home in 2004. He had no comment as he



Actor and comedian Bill Cosby is helped as he leaves a court appearance where he faced a felony charge of aggravated indecent assault Wednesday, Dec. 30, 2015, in Elkins Park, Pa. Cosby was arrested and charged Wednesday with drugging and sexually assaulting a woman at his home in January 2004. (AP Photo/Mel Evans)

was released on \$1 million bail.

The case marks the first time

Cosby has been charged with sexual misconduct despite years of lurid allega-

tions and sets the stage for perhaps the biggest Hollywood celebrity trial of the mobile-news era.

"Make no mistake: We intend to mount a vigorous defense against this unjustified charge, and we expect that Mr. Cosby will be exonerated by a court of law," his attorney Monique Pressley said in a statement.

The decision to prosecute came just days before Pennsylvania's 12-year statute of limitations for bringing charges was set to run out. It represents an about-face by the district attorney's office, which under a previous DA declined to charge Cosby in 2005 when the woman first told police that the comic put his hands down her pants. The former "Cosby Show" star and breaker of racial barriers was charged with aggravated indecent assault, punishable by five to 10 years in prison and a \$25,000 fine. He did not have to enter a plea.

Prosecutors accused Cosby of plying former Temple University employee Andrea Constand with pills and wine, then penetrating her with his fingers without her consent while she was drifting in and out of consciousness, unable to resist or cry out.

She was "frozen, paralyzed, unable to move," Montgomery County District Attorney-elect Kevin Steele said. In court papers, prosecutors said the drugs were the cold medicine Benadryl or some other, unidentified substance. Steele noted that Cosby has admitted giving quaaludes to women he wanted to have sex with.

Cosby acknowledged under oath a decade ago that he had sexual contact with Constand but said it was consensual.

Wearing a black-and-white hooded sweater, Cosby tripped on a curb as he made his way into court. Inside, he seemed to have trouble seeing the paperwork and finding the place to sign, and his lawyers helped him hold the pen. But he seemed at ease, laughing and chatting with his attorneys.

When the judge said, "Good luck to you, sir," he shouted: "Thank you!"

Prosecutors reopened the case over the summer as damaging testimony was unsealed in Constand's related civil lawsuit against Cosby and as dozens of other women came forward with similar accusations that destroyed his good-guy image as America's Dad. □

US levees monitored for flooding

J. SALTER

A. SCHER ZAGIER

Associated Press

ST. LOUIS (AP) — The dangers from a rare winter flood in the U.S. Midwest did not let up Wednesday, with officials keeping watch on 19 vulnerable levees along the Mississippi River and its tributaries as well as several smaller streams and lakes. Swollen rivers and streams were pushed to heights not seen since massive 1993 floods, causing Illinois

to transfer an unknown number of inmates from a state prison and declare disasters governor in seven counties. Missouri's governor to activate the National Guard to help divert traffic away from submerged roads. At least 20 deaths over several days in Missouri and Illinois were blamed on flooding, mostly involving vehicles that drove onto swamped roadways, and at least two people were still missing Wednesday. □

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US officials: 'Affluenza' teen likely won't be deported soon



Richard Hunter, chief deputy U.S. Marshal's Office Southern District of Texas, speaks about the Ethan Couch case during a media conference at the Federal Courthouse in Houston on Wednesday, Dec. 30, 2015.

(Melissa Phillip/Houston Chronicle via AP)

**M. GRACZYK
E. CASTILLO
Associated Press**

HOUSTON (AP) — The Texas teenager known for using an "affluenza" defense in a fatal drunken-driving accident likely won't return to the U.S. anytime soon because of a Mexican judge's decision to delay his deportation on Wednesday, a U.S. law enforcement official said.

Richard Hunter, chief deputy for the U.S. Marshals Service in South Texas, said during a news conference in Houston that a three-day court injunction granted to Ethan Couch will likely take at least two weeks to resolve.

Authorities believe the 18-year-old Couch, who was sentenced only to probation for the 2013 wreck in Texas, fled to Mexico with his mother in November as prosecutors investigated whether he had violated his probation. Both were taken into custody Monday after authorities said a phone call for pizza led to their capture in the resort city of Puerto Vallarta.

Hunter said Couch's mother, Tonya Couch, also wouldn't be deported as originally planned Wednesday, but he didn't say if she also had been granted a court delay. The pair were being held by immigration officials in Guadalajara. The ruling earlier Wednesday by the Mexican court gives a judge three days to decide whether the younger Couch has grounds to challenge his deportation based on arguments that kicking him out of the country would violate his rights. Hunter said the legal maneuver basically takes the decision out of an immigration agent's hands and asks a higher authority to make the deportation decision. He said such cases can often take anywhere from two weeks to several months, depending on the priorities of the local courts. "It also depends on the fact the Couches have legal counsel. And it seems to me, if they wanted to, they could pay them as much money as they want to drag this thing out," Hunter said. "We're hope-

ful that's not the case. We're hopeful the Mexican immigration court will make a quick and decisive decision and return the Couches to America."

During the sentencing phase of Couch's trial in 2013, a defense expert argued that his wealthy parents coddled him into a sense of irresponsibility — a condition the expert

termed "affluenza." The condition is not recognized as a medical diagnosis by the American Psychiatric Association, and its invocation during the legal proceedings drew ridicule.

"Couch continues to make a mockery of the system," said Fort Worth attorney Bill Berenson, who represented Sergio Molina, who was paralyzed and suffered se-

vere brain damage in the crash.

Couch's attorneys in the U.S. issued a statement Wednesday saying they couldn't comment on the case because they weren't licensed to practice law in Mexico. It wasn't immediately clear which attorneys were handling the case in Guadalajara.

Mexican police say Couch

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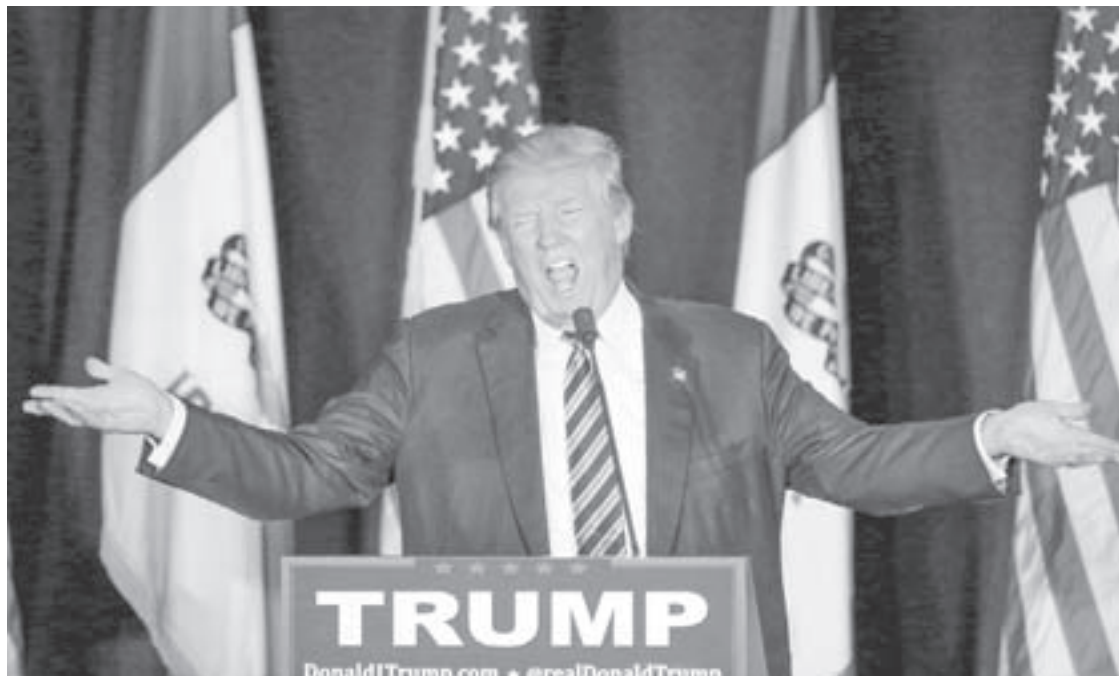
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Donald Trump calls former President Clinton a 'great abuser'



Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump speaks during a campaign stop in Council Bluffs, Iowa, Tuesday, Dec. 29, 2015.

(AP Photo/Nati Harnik)

RUSS BYNUM

JILL COLVIN

Associated Press

HILTON HEAD ISLAND, South Carolina (AP) —

Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump sought to assail Democrat Hillary Clinton on Wednesday by calling her husband, former President Bill Clinton, "one of the great abusers of the world."

Speaking to about 2,000

supporters at a rally, Trump again invoked the ex-president's alleged extramarital affairs and accused Bill Clinton of engaging in "tremendous abuse" of women.

Dismissing Hillary Clinton's accusation that Trump himself engaged in sexism, the real estate magnate and reality TV star said: "And she wants to accuse me of things. And the husband's

one of the great abusers of the world. Give me a break. Give me a break. Give me a break."

References to Bill Clinton's affair with White House intern Monica Lewinsky have rarely come up in the lead-up to the 2016 elections. But Trump, who has developed a pattern of attacking those who cross him in ways others won't, said Wednesday that Hill-

ary Clinton had forced his hand.

A spokesman for Clinton's campaign did not immediately respond to a request for comment. But deputy communications director Christina Reynolds said Monday that Clinton "won't be bullied" by Trump and plans to "stand up to him, as she has from the beginning of his campaign" when he insults women and other groups. Earlier this month Trump used a vulgar sexual term to describe how Hillary Clinton had been beaten by rival Barack Obama in the 2008 Democratic primary. In response, she said that Trump displayed a "penchant for sexism."

"When she said that, I had no choice," Trump said Wednesday. "You can't let people push you around," he said, adding: "We view this as war."

Bill Clinton was set to campaign on behalf of his wife in New Hampshire next week. While the front-runner among Democratic candidates in national polls, she trails rival can-

didate Bernie Sanders in some polls in the first-in-the-nation primary state.

The Clintons and the Trumps, two New York families, had been on friendly terms for years. The Clintons attended Trump's wedding to his third wife, Melania, and the couples' daughters, Ivanka and Chelsea, are friends. Trump came to Bill Clinton's defense when the Lewinsky scandal was unfolding, calling efforts to impeach him "nonsense." The former president has been accused of having a string of sexual encounters — both consensual and unwanted — with women over the years.

In the spring of 2014, Hillary Clinton was asked about the Lewinsky affair after Lewinsky wrote a first-person account in Vanity Fair magazine in which she said the ex-president "took advantage of me" but that it was a consensual relationship.

Hillary Clinton said in interviews at the time that she wished Lewinsky "well" but had moved on from the episode. □

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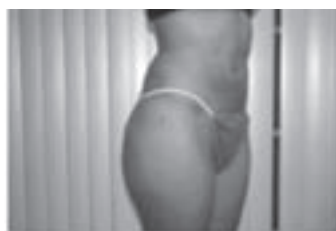
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Pataki ends his White House bid

K. RONAYNE

J. COLVIN

Associated Press

BERLIN, New Hampshire (AP) —

Former New York Gov. George Pataki said Tuesday that he's ending his bid for the 2016 Republican presidential nomination, with just over a month to go before the first nominating contests begin.

Pataki made the announcement in an ad that aired on local NBC affiliates in New Hampshire, Iowa and South Carolina Tuesday night. "While tonight is the end of my journey for the White House as I suspend my campaign for president, I'm confident we can elect the right person, someone who will bring us together and who understands that politicians, including the president, must be the people's servant and not their master," said Pataki, 70. A centrist Republican who led New York through the Sept. 11,

2001, attacks, Pataki failed to gain traction in a crowded field of candidates during an election season that has so far favored outsiders like billionaire businessman Donald Trump. Bruce Breton, a local elected official and member of Pataki's New Hampshire steering committee, said Pataki called him Tuesday afternoon to say he'd be exiting the race. Breton said Pataki's campaign had struggled to raise money and garner media attention.

"He said he couldn't get any traction. He worked hard, it's just a different type of year," Breton said. Pataki had hung his hopes on doing well in early-voting New Hampshire, but he has barely registered in state or national polls. He never made it onto a main Republican debate stage, where he would have had the chance to reach millions more viewers. □



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Turks, Belgians report foiling plans for holiday attacks

SUZAN FRASER
JOHN DAHLBURG
Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) —

With less than 48 hours left in 2015, Turkey on Wednesday became the latest country to announce the foiling of a holiday attack plot, detaining two suspected Islamic State militants believed to be planning suicide bombings during New Year celebrations in the capital city's heart. "They were caught before they had the opportunity to take action," said the office of the chief prosecutor of Ankara, Turkey's capital. The men were detained in a raid on a house in the low-income Mamak neighborhood, where police seized a suicide vest armed with a bomb, a second explosive device that was fortified with ball bearings and metal sticks and concealed inside a backpack, as well as bomb-making equipment, according to the prosecutor's office.

The two men, Turkish nationals identified only by their initials M.C. and A.Y., were being questioned by anti-terrorism police. The prosecutor's office said the



An armed police man patrols at the Grand Place in Brussels on Tuesday, Dec. 29, 2015. In Belgium, an investigation was continuing into what authorities characterized as a "serious threat" of holiday season attacks directed at police, soldiers and popular attractions in the capital city of Brussels.
(AP Photo/Geert Vanden Wijngaert)

men had staked out possible locations in Ankara where they could carry out the attacks.

The state-run Anadolu Agency, quoting unnamed police and judiciary officials, said the would-be bombers had intended to blow themselves up during holiday festivities at bars and a shopping mall in the central Kizilay district.

In Belgium, an investigation was continuing into what authorities characterized as a "serious threat" of holiday season attacks directed at police, soldiers and popular attractions in the capital city of Brussels. The arrest of two suspects was announced Tuesday by the Federal Prosecutor's Office, along with the seizure of military-style

training uniforms, computer equipment and propaganda materials from the Islamic State. No weapons or explosives were found. Brussels officials, however, were sufficiently worried about the remaining risks that Mayor Yvane Mayeur announced Wednesday evening that a New Year's Eve fireworks display and related festivities planned

Thursday in the city center are being canceled.

Last year, Mayor told RTBF French-language television, 100,000 people turned out, and in current circumstances, he said, "we can't guarantee that we can check everyone." On Thursday, the arrested men, whose names have not been made public, are due to go before a magistrate, who will decide whether to hold them for another month. An official close to the investigation, speaking on condition of anonymity because the case is ongoing, told The Associated Press both suspects belong to a motorcycle club, the Kamikaze Riders, which is known for illegal stunts on public roads.

At least one other member of the Kamikaze Riders is known to have been investigated in the past for possible links to Islamic radicalism, but his former lawyer said Wednesday nothing was ever proven.

Abdelouafi Eloussaki, a founding member of the Kamikaze Riders who died in a motorcycle crash in May 2013, had two younger brothers who were members of the radical group Sharia4Belgium. The group recruited fighters for the Islamist cause in Syria and has been designated a terrorist organization in Belgium. Both brothers also went to Syria, were one was killed and the other badly wounded. Attorney Abderrahim Lahlihi told the AP his former client was jailed for a time in Belgium after going to Turkey to fetch his wounded sibling and bring him home. But he said Belgian authorities never definitively linked the older Eloussaki to extremist causes.

Iraq tells Turkey to pull out of north, threatens action

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iraq on Wednesday reiterated its demand that Turkish troops withdraw from a northern camp where they are training anti-Islamic State fighters, warning that it will consider military action if the soldiers remain. The dispute flared up in early December after Turkey deployed reinforcements to a camp in northern Iraq's Bashiqa region where Ankara is helping to train Sunni and Kurdish fighters to battle IS.

The deployment riled Baghdad, which considers the new troops an illegal incursion and has demanded their immediate and complete withdrawal. Turkey has begun withdrawing troops, but some remain. Iraqi Foreign Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari told a press conference Wednesday that Baghdad will continue to pursue a peaceful resolution, but warned that if "fighting is imposed on us, we will consider it to protect our sovereignty, people and resources."

The Islamic State group seized much of northern and western Iraq, including the second largest city, Mosul, in the summer of 2014. The extremists have declared a caliphate in the areas of Iraq and Syria under their control and have imposed a harsh and violent version of Islamic law. On Monday, Iraqi forces backed by U.S.-led airstrikes drove IS militants out of the city center of Ramadi, the capital of the

western Anbar province, and raised the Iraqi flag over the main government complex there. IS had seized Ramadi in May, in its biggest advance since the start of a U.S.-led air campaign in August 2014. Gen. Ismail al-Mahlawi, the provincial military commander, said operations were paused in Ramadi on Wednesday due to rainy weather. IS militants still control around 30 percent of the city.



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Netherlands, Belgium to exchange territory - without a fight

RAF CASERT

Associated Press

WISE, Belgium (AP) —

Throughout history, borders have caused unfathomable bloodshed, ageless feuds and decades-old legal disputes, which makes plans for a friendly exchange of land between the Netherlands and Belgium all the more remarkable. The reason for such magnanimity? "Because it makes sense to do so," says Marcel Neven, the mayor of Vise, Belgium. Well, that and perhaps a little help from a headless body.

While Belgium will be losing a splendid piece of nature that juts into the Meuse River dividing the two nations, it will also unburden itself of a jurisdictional nightmare that developed over time as the river meandered to turn the portion of land belonging to Belgium — about 15 soccer fields worth — into a peninsula linked only to the Netherlands.

Over time, the area was rumored to be increasingly lawless, a haven for drug dealers and illicit sexual escapades. Then, some three years ago, passersby stumbled onto a headless body. "They alerted Dutch authorities, who told them it was Belgian territory," said Jean-Francois Duchesne, police Commissaire of the Lower Meuse region. In short, the Dutch could not go there because it was Belgian territory, and Belgian police and judicial authorities found it extremely tough to get there. They are not allowed to cross into the Netherlands without special permission and the peninsula had no proper landing zone for boats or equipment coming in by water.

"So we had to go there

by boat with all that was needed — the prosecutor, the legal doctor, the judicial lab — we had to do round trips over the water. It really was not very practical," Duchesne said.

And beyond that, Neven remembered: "You had to jump from the boat onto the shore. You needed to be in shape for this."

But soon there will be no more wading in water, and a peaceful swap should be reality.

"We should have done it a long time ago," Neven said.

Preparatory work has been done and the two nations' parliaments should be able to complete a deal sometime in 2016, Neven said, almost two centuries after the 1843 border posts were set. And all with a smile on everyone's face, even though Belgium will get only a tiny part around a lock that has been built to promote traffic between the two nations.

"In essence, it is very rare but it can happen," said barrister Malcolm Shaw, an expert on international border disputes. He highlighted how complicated history has woven the borders in the area close to where Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany touch, leaving enclaves and strangely twisted borders.

Border swaps can happen but mostly after bitter quarrels.

On the Indian-Bangladeshi border this summer, a dispute that raged since India's independence from British colonialists in 1947 was settled when the countries swapped more than 150 pockets of land. Earlier this month, it took the United Nations' highest court to settle a dispute between two Central American nations. The court



The Belgian and Dutch flags flap in the wind at the ferry port of Lanaye, Belgium. The town of Eijsden, in the Netherlands, has a short ferry which crosses the water to Lanaye, Belgium in a matter of minutes. (AP Photo/Virginia Mayo)

ruled that Nicaragua violated Costa Rica's territorial integrity in a longstanding fight over a small chunk of land near the shores of the Caribbean Sea. □

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In Russia, recession takes a bite out of the holiday feast

NATALIYA VASILYEVA

Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — For most Russians, it's not New Year's without a Salad Olivier, a dish meant to augur prosperity. This year, soaring food costs mean the tradition can also be a painful reminder of how rapidly

est economic downturn in President Vladimir Putin's 15 years in office.

The economy has been in decline for a couple years due to sanctions and a slump in the price of Russia's valuable oil exports. But this New Year's Eve will arguably be the first in more

hometown of Valdai in the north-west, says the usual items he would buy for the holiday became 30 to 40 percent more expensive over the year, causing him cut down on spending.

The national currency, the ruble, has fallen about 20 percent against the dollar

times used informally as a benchmark for the cost of living since it contains several staple ingredients, is indicative of a rise in food costs. Groceries for a typical holiday dinner for two including vegetables, sausage, cheese, pickles and chicken would cost 5,790 rubles (\$80) this year, 28 percent higher than a year ago.

"This year, Russians are celebrating without much joy because the year has been tough," says Marina Krasilnikova, a researcher at the polling agency Levada. "People are growing less confident in the economic situation of the country."

Retail sales were down 13 percent in November compared with a year earlier, the sharpest decline since 2000, the economic development ministry said in a report this week. In recent years, as Russia's oil-fueled economy was stagnating, retail sales were supporting the economy. Not anymore.

"Unlike during the 2008-2009 crisis, the food consumption has fallen as dramatically as the consumption of durable goods in 2015," the ministry's report said, adding that Russians are cutting down on food as the prices rise.

Worries about the economy featured prominently in Putin's annual news conference earlier this month, when journalists from state-owned media, not known for asking tough questions, grilled the president about falling incomes and living standards. Yet the majority of Russians tend not to blame Putin, whose popularity remains buoyed by

the annexation of Crimea in 2014, but his government. 81-year old Iraida Robkova says the 2000s were probably the most secure and happy years of her life before the economy went downhill last year: "We were free to speak what we wanted, to buy what we wanted, travel wherever we wanted and the prices were not that high."

Robkova, who lives in Moscow, spends at least 2,500 rubles (\$35) a month on medicine — while the state-sponsored allocation is just 800 rubles (\$11) — and says she would not be able to afford a New Year's dinner if it wasn't for her daughter and son-in-law, who also help her pay for groceries and utilities.

Robkova blames the economic problems on Putin's state ministers.

"Putin did a great thing: he got us Crimea back," she says. "But things are difficult for him. His team is weak." Economists are warning that lower incomes and higher prices are pushing millions back below the poverty line.

About 39 percent of Russians now say they are either short of money to buy food or cannot afford new clothes, compared to 22 percent just a year ago, according to a recent poll by VTsIOM. Some 1,600 people were surveyed by phone in mid-December in the poll, which had a margin of error of 3.5 percentage points.

Times are getting tougher even for those who left low-paying jobs in the regions in search of higher wages in Moscow and other big cities. □



A seller puts salad Olivier in a container for a customer in GUM Department Store in Red Square in Moscow, Russia, Tuesday, Dec. 29, 2015. For most Russians, it's not New Year's without a Salad Olivier, a dish meant to augur prosperity. This year, soaring food costs mean the tradition can also be a painful reminder of how rapidly many Russians' wealth is fading amid recession and Western sanctions.

(AP Photo/Pavel Golovkin)

many Russians' wealth is fading amid recession and Western sanctions.

The mix of chicken, potatoes, peas, carrots and mayonnaise — which was introduced by a Belgian chef in the 19th century, and shed richer ingredients like grouse and crayfish amid food shortages under the Soviets — will cost 35 percent more to prepare this year. The stiff rise, reported by the federal statistics office, comes amid the deep-

than a decade when Russians are feeling the pain of recession at the table.

"Before, you could buy jewelry or expensive perfume for the New Year," says 65-year old Nikolai Skomorokhov, who retired this month. "This time, it's about the bare minimum. We're mostly spending on the celebration."

Skomorokhov, who is visiting his daughter and grandchildren in Moscow for the holidays from his

this year, on top of a 40 percent slide in 2014, pushing up the price for imported goods. A Russian ban on Western food imports, imposed in retaliation for U.S. and European economic sanctions, has further hurt supply, pushing up prices. Official consumer price inflation was around 12 percent this year, but New Year's shopping shows a much higher rate.

The rise in the cost of a Salad Olivier, which is some-

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Santos looking ahead to White House meeting

Associated Press

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP) —

President Barack Obama will host his counterpart from Colombia in February to stand with his staunchest ally in South America as peace talks with leftist rebels enter a critical phase that may require additional U.S. support. Officials said the Feb. 4 meeting announced Tuesday is intended to commemorate 15 years since the start of the U.S.-funded Plan Colombia, which is credited with forcing the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, to enter peace talks in 2012.

In thanking Obama for the invitation, President Juan Manuel Santos said he hopes he'll be joined at the White House by two conservative predecessors, Alvaro Uribe and Andres Pastrana, who laid the framework for the battlefield success. But their presence is unlikely, as both are fierce critics of Santos and accuse him of being too lenient in talks with rebel leaders behind scores of war crimes. A major breakthrough in the Cuba-based talks came in September when negotiators announced a framework for rebels who confess their crimes to avoid jail time and instead serve out sentences helping war-torn rural communities rebuild.

While momentum toward a deal is building fast, several obstacles remain, two of which are in Obama's hands: the FARC's demand that the U.S. stop classifying the insurgency as a foreign terrorist organization and release from jail a veteran rebel known by his alias Simon Trinidad who is serving out a 60-year sentence on drug charges. □

Venezuela's socialists dispute 8 opposition swins

JORGE RUEDA

Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) —

Allies of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro are disputing the election of eight opposition candidates to the National Assembly, a move the opposition says seeks to undermine its landslide victory in legislative elections.

Earlier this week, the Supreme Court said it had received motions by losing candidates to overturn the results in several districts. It didn't say on what grounds the challenges were made and nobody from the high court would comment.

But if the court were to overturn the results it would deprive the opposition alliance of the two-thirds "supermajority" it won this month by a single seat and which greatly enhances its power to rein in Maduro, sack Cabinet ministers and even convoke an assembly to rewrite Hugo Chavez's 1999 constitution. Many in the opposition are denouncing the move by the government-stacked court as a guise to rob the opposition of the full fruits of its victory. They're also calling on the international community to condemn the move and safeguard



Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro gestures to supporters from the top of a car in the popular neighborhood of Petare, in Caracas, Venezuela. Allies of President Maduro are disputing the election of eight opposition candidates to the National Assembly, a move the opposition says seeks to undermine its landslide victory in legislative elections.

(AP Photo/Ariana Cubillos)

the Venezuelans' electoral wishes.

"You can't use legal tricks to steal something the voters didn't want to give you," proclaimed Jesus Torrealba, secretary general of the opposition coalition. "We're not living in a functional democracy," Torrealba said in a press conference with several leaders of the incoming congress. "We're living in a country where you can be surer about the operating hours

of a liquor store than the elections tribunal of the Supreme Court."

Maduro and his allies have been defiant in the face of defeat, vowing to deepen the revolution started by Chavez and overrun what they refer to as the "bourgeois parliament."

On Tuesday, the embattled leader briefly and only obliquely referred to the emerging dispute over the election results, saying that if authorities don't he would

reveal at an appropriate time evidence of vote-buying and other types of poll fraud by the opposition.

"They're playing dirty," Maduro said during his weekly television program. Instead, he used special decree powers to extend for three years a longstanding ban on firing workers, a move he said would protect the poor from the "economic war" being waged by his enemies at home and abroad. □

Release from jail of Colombian warlord hits snag

L. CARDONA

Associated Press

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP) —

A last-minute judicial review has blocked the release of a longtime paramilitary warlord in Colombia who was sentenced to 40 years in prison for ordering hundreds of murders.

Early on Tuesday, the lawyer for Ramon Isaza said his client was paroled by a Bogota court after serving the maximum

eight-year sentence granted to thousands of paramilitary fighters who surrendered and confessed their crimes under a 2005 peace accord. Local networks showed images of a pick-up truck with tinted windows and escorted by armed guards leaving a Bogota prison supposedly ferrying the militia leader to freedom.

But the office of the Inpec prisons administrator told

The Associated Press later in the day that Isaza's release was being held up by a pending investigation by a court in northwestern Colombia.

Victims and prosecutors have questioned the grounds for Isaza's release, saying he has not cooperated with investigations into massacres committed by his fighters. Isaza, a 74-year-old who goes by the alias "El Viejo" (the

Old Man), has defended himself by saying he suffers from memory loss.

Isaza was one of the original leaders of the right-wing militias formed by ranchers in the late 1970s to combat leftist rebels.

In the 1990s he battled Pablo Escobar's Medellin cocaine cartel for control of lucrative drug routes in the lawless Magdalena Valley where his fighters were long dominant. □

Padilla: Puerto Rico to default on \$37M in interest due

DANICA COTO
Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — Puerto Rico's governor announced Wednesday that the U.S. territory will meet \$594 million in bond payments due next week but will still default on \$37 million in interest.

territory access to debt reorganization under federal bankruptcy laws.

"I'm not asking for a bailout," he said. "I'm asking for the tools to address the problem."

Puerto Rico has been in an economic decline for nearly a decade and its

He said the bonds are not protected by the U.S. territory.

This is the second time that Puerto Rico has defaulted on Public Finance Corporation bonds. The government missed a \$58 million bond payment in August. Garcia has stressed that

the gravity of the island's situation and the need for Congress to act.

"Puerto Rico is at a dead end, shifting funds from one creditor to pay another and diverting money from already-depleted pension funds to pay both current bills and debt service," it said.

While Puerto Rico is still pursuing access to a bankruptcy mechanism, U.S. House Speaker Paul Ryan, a Republican from Wisconsin, has pledged that the House will come up with "a responsible solution" for Puerto Rico's debt problems next year.

In addition, the U.S. Supreme Court announced recently that it would hear an appeal on a ruling that barred Puerto Rico from giving municipalities the power to declare bankruptcy.

But immediate relief is needed, said Eric LeCompte, executive director of the debt relief organization Jubilee USA.

"No matter what the outcome is from the U.S. Supreme Court or even from Congress, it won't come in time to prevent a default and further austerity from taking place in Puerto Rico," he said in a telephone interview.

The government has already increased taxes, closed schools, withheld tax returns and taken other numerous measures to cut costs and generate more revenue amid a worsening economic crisis. □



Puerto Rico Gov. Alejandro Javier Garcia Padilla testifies on Capitol Hill in Washington on Puerto Rico's fiscal problems. On Wednesday, Dec. 30, 2015, Padilla said the U.S. territory will make a bond payment due the next week but default on the interest. The island is struggling with billions in public debt that Garcia has said is unpayable and needs restructuring.

(AP Photo/Pablo Monsivais)

Gov. Alejandro Garcia Padilla said the payment includes \$329 million in general obligation bonds. However, he warned there is no money available for future payments, including \$400 million due in May in bonds issued by the Government Development Bank.

Garcia said Puerto Rico needs Congress to give the

government is struggling with \$72 billion in public debt that Garcia has said is unpayable and needs restructuring.

He said the government will be forced to default next week on \$35.9 million in Puerto Rico Infrastructure Financing Authority bonds and \$1.4 million of Public Finance Corporation bonds.

the government's priority is to maintain operation of basic services such as schools, hospitals and police stations.

"Puerto Rico is going to pull through," he said. "These decisions are made to protect Puerto Ricans."

The U.S. Treasury said in a statement that the impending default demonstrates

Castro prepares Cuba for tough year despite opening

M. WEISSENSTEIN
Associated Press

HAVANA (AP) — President Raul Castro warned Cubans this week to prepare for tough economic conditions in 2016 despite warmer relations with the United States.

Castro said that while tourism is booming, low oil prices have damaged the outlook of an economy that depends on billions of dollars of subsidized oil and cash from Venezuela.

According to state-controlled media, Cuba's pres-

ident told the National Assembly to expect 2 percent growth in gross domestic product next year, half the rate his government reported in 2015.

Foreign media are barred from the twice-annual meetings of the National Assembly.

Despite the government's assertion that the GDP grew 4 percent this year, there is widespread dissatisfaction among Cubans over the widening gap between low salaries and the high price of essential goods,

most particularly food.

Castro appeared to be preparing Cubans for harder times ahead, saying that "we must cut any unnecessary spending and make use of the resources that we have with more rationality and with the goal of developing the country."

He dedicated a lengthy section of his speech to Venezuela, where the opposition to Cuba-backed socialist President Nicolas Maduro recently took control of parliament amid widespread shortages and

spiraling violence.

Cheap oil "has affected our relationship of mutual aid with various countries, particularly the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the target of an economic war aimed at undermining popular support for its revolution," Castro said.

He urged Cubans to avoid what he labeled "defeatism" in the face of a drop in Venezuelan aid, saying "the history of our revolution is full of glorious pages despite difficulties, risks and threats." □

Puerto Rico police shooting suspect had troubled past

DANICA COTO
Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — The policeman who allegedly shot three fellow officers to death at work underwent psychological treatment for a decade and had faced three separate investigations for insubordination and unexcused absences, a Puerto Rico police spokesman said.

Guarionex Candelario Rivera had been on sick leave for most of December when he showed up unannounced Monday at the station in the southern coastal city of Ponce to demand a meeting with the colonel who oversees the department, Sgt. Axel Valencia told The Associated Press.

Col. Hector Agosto was returning from vacation, so he said Candelario should meet instead with Lt. Luz Soto Segarra, who was one of the officers later shot to death, Valencia said. It was unclear why Candelario, a 19-year police veteran, requested the meeting, the spokesman said.

Authorities previously said Candelario took Soto hostage along with Cmdr. Frank Roman Rodriguez and policewoman Rosario Hernandez De Hoyos, then shot them.

Candelario himself was shot twice during the incident and is hospitalized with a bullet lodged in his thorax and another in his arm, Dr. Israel Ayala told reporters earlier Tuesday. He said the 50-year-old suspect might have to undergo surgery but was expected to recover.

Associate Police Superintendent Juan Rodriguez told the newspaper El Nuevo Dia that Soto's husband, a police officer who works in the same building, shot Candelario when he arrived at his wife's office soon after she was shot.

Valencia said authorities expected to file charges against Candelario once his health improved. □



Dande: A Beloved Part of Aruba's New Year's Tradition

CAROLINA BULOS
www.bondia24.com

Special to Aruba Today

ORANJESTAD – The tradition of Dande is a beloved part of Aruba's New Year's ritual – but what is Dande, and where and how did it come about? The Aruba Today shares some notes on the history of Dande:

HISTORY OF DANDE:

The history of Dande has been told many times, but the question is where did Dande come from. Dande is folklore of Aruba that initiated in 1890. The instruments that are used are known as "wiri" and

"tambor". To complete the group, 1 singer accompanies the instruments that are played. A machete has been used in the past to give the Dande its rhythm, which was also the way of the "wiri".

After celebrating the opening of the New Year, the Dande groups would head out to sing and play until the 3 Kings' Day. This meant that for almost a week they would never arrive home, but would be out performing. This was because in the past, the houses used to be further away from one another and the group had to walk



a lot. They would also travel via donkey to reach their destinations faster. As soon as they arrive, the door is closed they start singing and wait for the owner of the house to invite them in. Before the song finishes, the group goes outside, where the owner of the house usually gives them something for their performance.

LYRICS OF DANDE:

The singer sings the lead of the house, it used to only be men but now it can also be a woman, then the wives/husbands and kids. The lyrics of Dande are sacred. It is a message of God to the house and family. They used to be lyrics that request a blessing of humility, harvesting and a lot more. But nowadays, since Dande has be-

come more modern, the lyrics have also changed. The rhythm of Dande is a smooth one, and not fast like other songs in other festivals. The lyrics are all

the words have also been changed. Some of the newly introduced instruments are guitar, maracas, mandolin, accordion or marimba, but no electron-



about humility and have no politics whatsoever involved in them.

A MODERNIZED DANDE:

Slowly but surely, Dande has become more modern, whereas more instruments are being used, but

ic instruments. The current generation is taking the folklore of Aruba, which is Dande, but they need to try to maintain the originality of this.

GIVING OF MONEY:

In the past, the Dande groups would finish playing and would be invited inside the home, where the homeowner would offer them some local snacks. They would also receive some ginger. But this slowly changed, and now the singer will sing to the person individually, giving them blessings and the family will put some money in a hat to show their appreciation. □



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The Year In Sports



Super Pick, Flubbed Kick Highlight Best Games of 2015

In this Feb. 1, 2015 photo, New England Patriots cornerback Malcolm Butler (21) intercepts a pass intended for Seattle Seahawks wide receiver Ricardo Lockette during the NFL Super Bowl XLIX football game in Glendale, Ariz.

(AP Photo/Kathy Willens)

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THURSDAY, DECEMBER 31

New Year's Eve

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NBA Roundup: Horford leads Hawks over the Rockets 121-115



Houston Rockets' James Harden (13) loses the ball after being fouled as Atlanta Hawks' Al Horford (15) defends during the first quarter of an NBA basketball game Tuesday, Dec. 29, 2015, in Houston. (AP Photo/David J. Phillip)

HOUSTON (AP) — Al Horford had 30 points and 14 rebounds to lead the Atlanta Hawks to a 121-115 victory over the Houston Rockets on Tuesday night.

Atlanta trailed by 19 early in the game before rallying for the victory. Kent Bazemore added 26 points and Paul Millsap and Jeff Teague both had 22 as the

Hawks won for the seventh time in eight games.

Dwight Howard led Houston with 30 points and 16 rebounds, while James Harden had 26 points, 10 rebounds and eight assists. Atlanta took a lead late in the fourth quarter and employed the hack-a strategy, intentionally fouling Howard and Clint Capela repeatedly. The strategy was largely successful until Howard made a free throw to take the lead with just over two minutes remaining.

Atlanta then scored the final nine points of the game to steal the road victory.

Oklahoma City's Russell Westbrook scored 27 points and Kevin Durant added 26 to lead the Thunder to a 131-123 win over the Milwaukee Bucks.

Enes Kanter added 23 points while rookie Cameron Payne had a career-high 16 for the Thunder.

Westbrook and Durant both scored more than 20 points for the 25th time this season as Oklahoma City overcame an early eight-point deficit to win for the 11th time in its last 14 games.

Khris Middleton scored a career-best 36 points to

lead Milwaukee.

In New York, Carmelo Anthony scored 24 points and Derrick Williams added 18 to lead six Knicks in double figures and end a four-game losing streak with a 108-96 win over the Detroit Pistons.

Jose Calderon added 15 points, Kyle O'Quinn had 12, Robin Lopez scored 11, and Kristaps Porzingis finished with 10.

Ersan Ilyasova led the Pistons with 19 points. Marcus Morris and Reggie Jackson each had 17.

Williams scored 16 of his points in the final quarter, hitting 5-of-6 shots from the field.

The Memphis Grizzlies beat the Miami Heat 99-90 after Marc Gasol scored seven of his 23 points in overtime. Zach Randolph added 17 points for Memphis. Mike Conley and Jeff Green had 16 apiece, and Mario Chalmers scored 12 points. Gasol would add eight rebounds, six assists and four blocks, including a pair of rejections in the closing minutes.

In Denver, LeBron James scored 34 points on the eve of his 31st birthday and Iman Shumpert added a season-high 16 as the Cavaliers beat the Nuggets 93-87.

Kevin Love had eight points and 14 rebounds to help Cleveland finish off a four-game West Coast swing with a 2-2 mark. The Cavaliers rested Kyrie Irving on the second night of a back-to-back as he works his way back from a fractured left kneecap. □

Knicks player Cleanthony Early shot in the leg

COLLEEN LONG
Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — New York Knicks player Cleanthony Early was shot in the leg as he left a strip club on Wednesday by masked robbers who demanded his "gold," law enforcement officials said. Early left CityScapes in Queens with his girlfriend at about 4:30 a.m. in a cab when the vehicle was surrounded by at least two other cars and as many as six men got out, the two officials said. Early handed over two gold chains before he was shot in the right kneecap, the officials said. The men drove off. The cab driver and girlfriend were uninjured, and the driver was robbed only of his identification. Early, 24, was hospitalized in a stable condition.

The two law enforcement officials spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to release the victim's name.

The team said in a brief statement that it was aware of an incident involving Early and "relieved that he is not in a life-threatening situation." Police were searching for suspects and trying to determine if it was a carefully planned attack or a spur-of-the-moment hit.

The theft comes about 10 days after Knicks forward Derrick Williams was robbed of \$617,000 in jewelry from his home. He took home two women from a Manhattan club. □

College Bowl Roundup:

Jefferson's 3 TDs lead Baylor by UNC 49-38 in Russell Bowl



Baylor running back Johnny Jefferson (5) runs for a touchdown past the North Carolina defense including safety Donnie Miles (15) during the first half of the Russell Athletic Bowl NCAA college football game, Tuesday, Dec. 29, 2015, in Orlando, Fla.

(AP Photo/John Raoux)

ORLANDO, Florida (AP) — Johnny Jefferson rushed for three touchdowns and a bowl-record 299 yards as No. 18 Baylor ran past No. 10 North Carolina 49-38 in the Russell Athletic Bowl on Tuesday. Despite missing two quarterbacks, an award-winning receiver, and a 1,000-yard running back, the Bears' No. 1-ranked scoring offense stayed creative, pounding out 645 yards rushing and 756 total yards — both records. Devin Chafin added 161 yards and a touchdown, and Terence Williams rushed for 97 yards and two

touchdowns for the Bears (10-3). Marquise Williams passed for 243 yards and three scores, and rushed for two more. Elijah Hood added 118 yards rushing. In Houston, Leonard Fournette scored five touchdowns and ran for 212 yards as No. 22 LSU used a big third quarter to pull away for a 56-27 win over Texas Tech in the Texas Bowl. Texas Tech (7-6) cut the lead to 1 early in the third quarter before the Tigers (9-3) scored 21 straight points, with two touchdowns by Fournette, to make it 42-20

entering the fourth. Fournette had two rushing touchdowns of 2 yards, ran for TDs of 43 and 4 yards and took a screen pass 44

yards for another score. Patrick Mahomes threw for 370 yards and four touchdowns for Texas Tech, but was under heavy pressure all night and was sacked six times and scrambled away from probably 10 more. In the inaugural Arizona Bowl, James Butler scored on a 4-yard run with 1:06 left as Nevada benefited from a late gaffe by Colorado State to beat the Rams 28-23. Colorado State (7-6) trailed most of the game before taking the lead on Wyatt Bryan's 38-yard field goal with just under 4 minutes left.

The Wolf Pack (7-6) responded quickly, marching 72 yards in eight plays to set up Butler's tackle-breaking touchdown run.

Nick Stevens orchestrated a quick-hitting drive in the final minute with no timeouts, but receiver Jordon

Vaden was unable to get out of bounds at Nevada's 12-yard line and time ran out on the Rams.

In Fort Worth, Texas, Jared Goff threw for 467 yards and six touchdowns as California won in the postseason for the first time in seven years, beating Air Force 55-36 in the Armed Forces Bowl.

Goff had three of his scoring tosses in a span of five plays in the second quarter as the Bears (8-5) broke a 14-14 tie and cruised in a rematch of the 2007 Armed Forces Bowl, also won by Cal (42-36).

Receiver Kenny Lawler had three touchdowns for Cal, which last made the postseason in a 21-10 loss to Texas in the Holiday Bowl in 2011. The Bears' last bowl win was 24-17 over Miami in the 2008 Emerald Bowl near their Bay Area campus. □

Eagles fire coach Chip Kelly with only 1 game left in third season

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — The Philadelphia Eagles have fired coach Chip Kelly with one game left in his third season, dumping their coach after missing the playoffs in consecutive seasons. Kelly was released Tuesday night just before the end of a disappointing season that began with Super Bowl expectations. The Eagles are 6-9 after going 10-6 in each of Kelly's first two seasons. Eagles CEO Jeffrey Lurie said Tuesday that he appreciates Kelly's contribu-

tions and wishes him success going forward. The Eagles also fired Ed Marynowitz, who was vice president of player personnel. Kelly made several bold moves that backfired after assuming full control of personnel decisions last offseason. Kelly replaced Andy Reid and led the Eagles to an NFC East title in 2013 after they were 4-12 a year earlier. The Eagles missed the playoffs in 2014 after starting 9-3. They were 7-12 in Kelly's last 19 games. □

- FRENCH - December 31st 2015 -

STEAKHOUSE

New Year's Eve - Dinner Menu

Appetizer
 Potato & Leek Soup
 Creamy potato & leek soup with onions, garlic, olive oil and croutons
 or
 Filet of Grouper with Mango Relish
 Baked grouper filet in white wine and stuffed with mango relish
 or
 Romaine Lettuce
 With diced tomatoes, caramelized walnuts, cucumbers and balsamic citrus vinaigrette

Main Course
 Grouper Almondine
 Pan fried Grouper with Almond butter sauce
 or
 Seared Chilean Sea-bass
 With creamy ginger sauce
 or
 Charbroiled Filet of Beef Tenderloin
 With Burgundy sauce
 or
 Broiled Lobster Tail
 Oven broiled lobster tail with herbs and garlic butter sauce

All entrees served with ratatouille vegetable, mashed potato or soufflé potatoes

Dessert
 Crème Brûlée, Chocolate Mousse or Homemade Cheese Cake

Price per Person \$65.00
 excluding 15% service charge
 Children 11 years and under half price

Bottle of House Champagne or Wine per couple included

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NHL Roundup:

Barkov scores 2 goals to lead Panthers past Canadiens 3-1



Florida Panthers left wing Jussi Jokinen (36) falls to the ice after being tripped by Montreal Canadiens defenseman P.K. Subban, right, during the third period of an NHL hockey game, Tuesday, Dec. 29, 2015, in Sunrise, Fla. The Panthers defeated the Canadiens 3-1.

(AP Photo/Lynne Sladky)

SUNRISE, Florida (AP) — scored the 733rd of his career to lead the Florida Panthers past the Montreal Canadiens 3-1 on Tuesday night for their seventh straight victory.

Roberto Luongo stopped 27 shots and the Panthers leapfrogged Montreal for first place in the Atlantic Division.

The winning streak is their longest since March 2008 and it matches the franchise record.

Max Pacioretty scored for Montreal, but the slumping Canadiens have lost seven of their past eight games and 11 of 13.

Ben Scrivens made 27 saves in his first NHL action since April 11 last season. Montreal acquired him from Edmonton on Monday.

Chicago's Patrick Kane scored a goal, assisted on two others and raised his NHL-leading point total to 53 in helping the Blackhawks beat the Arizona Coyotes 7-5.

Andrew Desjardins scored twice for the Blackhawks, who overcame Shane Doan's hat trick and set a season high for goals in a

game.

Artem Anisimov scored his 13th of the season, Brent Seabrook had two assists and Duncan Keith added a goal and an assist for Chicago.

Doan scored three times for the Coyotes, tying Dale Hawerchuk for the club record with 379 career goals. In Columbus, Ohio, Nick Foligno and Brandon Dubinsky each had three assists as the last-place Blue Jackets beat the NHL-best Dallas Stars 6-3.

Boone Jenner, Kevin Connaughton, Matt Calvert, Brandon Saad, Scott Hartnell and Rene Bourque scored for Columbus, which had lost three straight and eight of 10 — prompting coach John Tortorella to call out his team over the past several days.

Curtis McElhinney made 39 saves, and 11 players had at least one point for the Blue Jackets. □

Catch your own dinner with Driftwood!

Motto at Driftwood Restaurant: "from the pier to your plate!"



ORANJESTAD - The downtown marina is home of Driftwood Fishing Charters, the successful fisherman of the established seafood restaurant Driftwood in Oranjestad. Driftwood owner Herby

Merryweather has a love and passion for fishing. A fisherman who knows about fish, what our local waters have to offer, and what the words "fresh seafood" really mean. What Herby catches will be served in his restaurant on the same day. Herby loves to share his fishing passion with the many visitors to the island. His fleet of a 35ft. Twin Engine Bertram yacht and a 50ft. Twin Engine Post yacht, appropriately called "Driftwood I and II, is available for charters on 12 noon and from 1pm to 5pm.



Winners of Intl. LUHRS Marina Group Blue Marlin Release Tournament 2009

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You can call Herby directly at (297) 592 4040 or go to www.driftwoodaruba.com

Driftwood Restaurant. This authentic Aruban seafood restaurant is located in characteristic downtown Oranjestad. Their

extended menu has been jubled by many. Driftwood offers daily specials, as well as a delicious 4-course menu for just \$25.95 **Charter deep sea fishing rates:** \$400 - 1/2 day • \$760 - full day. Rates per boat Max. 6 people. **Driftwood Restaurant** Authentic Aruban Seafood Restaurant; Klipstraat #12, Downtown Oranjestad. Tel: (297) 583 2515 www.driftwoodaruba.com Open hours: every day, from 5pm till 10:30pm. Sunday Closed.



The Year In Sports:

Super Pick, Flubbed Kick Highlight Best Games of 2015

EDDIE PELLIS

AP National Writer

The games people play. There are around 300 in pro football, 2,500 in baseball, 1,500 in basketball and thousands in soccer every year — and that's just at the very highest levels. Most blend into each other. Only a few stand out.

Those that leave a lasting impression do so because of, say, a flubbed snap on a punt, or a play call that decides a title, or a near-perfect, once-in-a-generation race to the finish line. Those games and races kept us at the edge of our seats in 2015 — then eventually brought us completely out of our chairs and made us shake our heads upon realizing, once again, that just when we think we've seen it all, we're reminded that we really haven't.

A look at some of the best games and events of 2015:

SUPER CALL: Seattle had the ball at the New England 1-yard line with two, maybe three, chances to let one of the best running backs in the game, Marshawn Lynch, bull in for what would have been the winning touchdown. Instead, Seahawks coach Pete Carroll called for a pass. Patriots defensive back Malcolm Butler, a one-time do-everything employee at a fast-food chicken restaurant, had been focusing on that exact play call during the week in practice. He recognized it, stepped in front of the receiver and intercepted the pass to save the game for the Patriots. Carroll then spent hours, days and weeks defending his play call, while Butler no longer had to worry about returning to the chicken joint.

TRIPLE CROWN: It had been 37 years since Affirmed crossed the finish line first at the Belmont Stakes to win the last Triple Crown. And over those 37 years, horse racing and its fans had seen 13 horses win the first two legs, only to falter — or,

in one case, not even line up at the Belmont. American Pharoah finally broke through. He started slow and carried a two-length lead through most of the race. But then, he showed the heart and speed of a champion, pulling away over the last five furlongs to cross the finish line in 2 min-

utes, 26.65 seconds — ending nearly four decades of close calls.

ever on YouTube. "That's why football is loved so much in America," Michigan State coach Mark Dantonio said. "It's because things like this happen. Every now and then, they happen."

FOR OPENERS: The first inning of Game 1 included

much for who lost at the end, as who won. The 2015 U.S. Open will be remembered for both. There was Dustin Johnson's hard-to-watch three-putt from 12 feet that cost him the title — a title that went to Jordan Spieth, hardly a fluke winner in anybody's book. It was the second major

then again two minutes later. The United States scored four goals in the first 16 minutes, capped by Lloyd's shot from midfield, and went on for a 5-2 victory. For a while after the match, Lloyd's Wikipedia page listed her as "President of the United States."



In this Oct. 17, 2015 photo, Michigan State defensive back Jalen Watts-Jackson, lower right, falls into the end zone after recovering a fumbled snap on a punt in the closing seconds of the second half of an NCAA college football game in Ann Arbor, Mich. Michigan punter Blake O'Neill fumbled the snap and Watts-Jackson pulled it in, cradled it to his body and ran 38 yards for a touchdown. (AP Photo/Carlos Osorio)

utes, 26.65 seconds — ending nearly four decades of close calls.

THE FLUB: All Michigan punter Blake O'Neill had to do was field the snap and get off the kick, just as he'd done hundreds of times previously in practices and games. Instead, O'Neill fumbled the snap and Michigan State's Jalen Watts-Jackson pulled it in, cradled it to his body and ran 38 yards for a touchdown. The Spartans won 27-23, and because of that win, they are still in the hunt for the national title. Some of the most memorable reactions came from the heartbroken, close-to-tears Michigan fans, a few of which were captured for-

the first inside-the-park home run in a World Series in 86 years. Later, there was a power outage that stopped play and knocked the telecast off the air. The game lasted 14 innings and, at 5 hours, 9 minutes, was the longest World Series Game 1 played. Kansas City hit a game-tying home run in the bottom of the ninth and went on to beat the Mets 5-4. And if that wasn't drama enough, there was the underlying story of starting pitcher Edinson Volquez, who pitched even though his father had died only hours before the game.

THE 3-WOOD AND THE THREE-PUTT: So many majors are remembered as

of the year for Spieth and he set it up with a 284-yard 3-wood from the near-barren 18th fairway at Chambers Bay that led to a birdie. Four days of listening to players grumble about conditions on the course, then watching most of them play down to their expectations, ended with 30 minutes of pure drama — and with Spieth cradling the trophy.

FLURRY OF GOALS: In a rematch of the previous World Cup final, the U.S. team played Japan, which had beaten the Americans on penalty kicks four years earlier. Thanks to Carli Lloyd, this game was anything but a repeat. Lloyd scored in the third minute,

RUGBY UPSET: It was supposed to be a tuneup for perennial title contender South Africa. It ended up being "a rugby miracle" at the World Cup, as the TV announcers called it, pulled off by none other than 1,000-1 longshot Japan. The "Cherry Blossoms" only other victory on the world's biggest stage had come back in 1991. This time, they played South Africa toe-to-toe for more than 80 minutes, and into extra time. Trailing by three, Japan decided against kicking for a tie, and instead got the ball to replacement back Karne Hesketh, who squeezed into rugby's version of the end zone for the winning points in a 34-32 victory. □

2015: A Year Of Sports Scandals With a Silver Lining



FIFA President Sepp Blatter arrives for a news conference in Zurich, Switzerland. 2015 was the year when scandals off the field of play eclipsed exploits on it. (AP Photo/Matthias Schrader)

JOHN LEICESTER
AP Sports Writer

PARIS (AP) — For the past 12 months, scandals off the field of play eclipsed exploits on it. Beyond the usual cases of doping and cheating that are sadly common in modern sports, shocking corruption in soccer and athletics begged the question of whether the vast riches and accompanying greed generated by professional sport are rotting the entire multi-billion dollar industry to its core.

On the upside, the stink got so bad that 2015 also saw the forces of law and order sit up and take action, opening criminal investigations, making high-profile arrests and recovering tens of millions of ill-gotten dollars. That legal pressure sped change, notably at soccer governing body FIFA, forcing administrators to abandon some of their old-school, shoddy, back-room and amateur management practices and enact reforms that should make them behave more professionally.

"What we're going through now, it's like a tectonic shift," says International Olympic Committee veteran Dick Pound. "Sports organizations are coming to realize — voluntarily or involuntarily — that they can no longer operate outside of the larger social and le-

gal orders."

"In the old days, sport was well outside of anything that governments had focused on," Pound said in an Associated Press interview. "They were all private organizations and they were kind of run informally like clubs and so on, and have tried to pretend that they can do that even in 2015 — and they can't." In short, this was a year that left a sour taste for sports fans but also offered some hope of a brighter future. It was bookended by "Deflate-gate," which saw star NFL quarterback Tom Brady accused of throwing de-

liberately under-inflated (and theoretically easier to grip) footballs in January's AFC title game on his way to winning the Super Bowl, and by the disgrace of Sepp Blatter, kicked out of soccer in December for unethical conduct, ending his 17 scandal-scarred years as president of FIFA. His heir-in-waiting, France's former midfielder star Michel Platini, also was banned for a dubious \$2 million payment that Blatter approved for the FIFA vice-president in 2011. Their appeals of the eight-year bans that decapitated the leadership of the world's most popular sport, as well



New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady smiles and waves goodbye to the media in Foxborough, Mass. 2015 was the year when scandals off the field of play eclipsed exploits on it.

(AP Photo/Stephan Savoia)

as ongoing criminal probes in Switzerland and the United States of soccer bribery and corruption, promise to cloud FIFA's ambitions for a fresh start with the election of a new president in February. In track and field, a cornerstone of the Olympic Games, a World Anti-Doping Agency-ordered investigation that Pound led concluded explosively in November that doping in Russia was not only widespread and deep-rooted but also likely tacitly sanctioned by President Vladimir Putin's government. A resulting blanket-ban from competition could see Russian track and field athletes miss the Rio de Janeiro Olympics unless the sporting powerhouse can convince the International Association of Athletics Federations that it has made real changes. In March, the IAAF's ethics commission also started investigating alleged doping cover-ups in distance-running power Kenya, which topped the world championships medal table in August.

Those probes were just the beginning of a scandal that threatened to sink the IAAF in 2015, gravely undermining not only the federation but trust in the entire sport it oversees. In November, three months after stepping down as IAAF chief, Lamine Diack was taken into police custody in France, suspected of pocketing more than 1 million euros (\$1.1 million) in an alleged scheme to blackmail athletes and hush up their doping cases. Diack, who presided at the IAAF for nearly 16 years, is under formal investigation for corruption and money laundering. If proven by France's investigating magistrates, the allegations could be even graver than soccer's massive scandal. The U.S. Department of Justice's sprawling soccer case alleges more than \$200 million in bribes and kickbacks in the selling of media and marketing rights. Although grievous, the schemes seemingly didn't affect the outcome

of matches. The alleged wrongdoing at the IAAF, however, raised the possibility that on-track results were corrupted by off-track criminality, and that dopers may have robbed competitors of medals by paying the sport's guardians to look the other way. Contacted repeatedly by the AP, Diack's lawyer has refused to comment.

Tasked with cleaning up the mess is British former middle-distance running great Sebastian Coe, elected in August as Diack's successor. But just months into his new job, the credibility of the chief organizer of the 2012 London Olympics suffered a blow when the BBC uncovered in November that Coe had spoken privately to an executive at Nike, his long-time personal sponsor, about hosting the 2021 world championships in Eugene. The Oregon city about 100 miles (160 kilometers) south of the sports-wear giant's headquarters outside Portland was subsequently and controversially awarded the competition without an open bidding process.

Coe denied that working for both the IAAF and Nike represented a conflict of interest and severed his ambassadorial role with the company. But the affair left doubts about Coe's judgment and, more broadly, fed into a dominant theme of 2015, which was that sports administrators often appeared chronically out of touch with a shift in the public mood against their clubby ways and, in worst cases, their criminal habits.

"It simply won't work in this day and age," Pound said. "You have to be more transparent, which doesn't mean that you run around buck naked, but people have got to understand how a decision was reached, and by whom, and for what reasons, and that sort of thing that never used to happen. There was a code of silence."

"Sport has got to change ...," he added, "or it's going to be changed." □

Online animals of the year: Cute faces and a rat's resolve



This Dec. 1, 2015 photo shows Grumpy Cat with her owner Tabitha Bundesen during an interview at the Associated Press in Los Angeles. Animals can melt the human heart, tickle the funny bone or bring us to tears. All you have to do is follow, like or pin them. There is no end to the number of online animals - from YouTube to www.explore.org and all the social media sites in between. Nobody was busier than Grumpy Cat in 2015. (AP Photo/Richard Vogel)

SUE MANNING Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Animals can melt the human heart, tickle the funny bone or bring us to tears. And thanks to Instagram, YouTube and other online options, you can enjoy their antics simply by following, liking or pinning them.

Dr. Bonnie Beaver, executive director of the American College of Veterinary Behaviorists and a professor at Texas A&M University's College of Veterinary Medicine, says two things make animal photos and videos so popular.

— Many animals have physical traits that subconsciously cause humans to nurture, like large, round heads and large eyes. Think E.T.

— Many images show animals doing something unexpectedly clever, human-like or just plain cute — kittens trying to run up a slide, for example, she said.

"Some do both," Beaver said, "like Garfield and Mickey Mouse."

The Associated Press got hooked on six animals in 2015, from dogs and cats to a panda and a rat, whose popularity is likely to continue into the new year. Here's a look.

GRUMPY CAT

Nobody's busier than

Grumpy Cat. She had 8.3 million Facebook followers as of Christmas Eve. Her YouTube videos have drawn viewers by the tens of millions.

On Dec. 8, the feline with the comical frown became the first cat immortalized in wax at the Madame Tussauds museum in San Francisco.

The 3-year-old, 4-pounder with feline dwarfism is making her second movie as well as a cartoon series, and is featured in a series of Random House Little Golden Books (the first being "The Little Grumpy Cat that Wouldn't"). She's also continuing as spokescat for Friskies cat food. Her stuffed animal line will grow in 2016,

and there are calendars, socks, tanks, T-shirts, sweat-shirts, gift tags, key chains and other souvenirs, said owner Tabitha "Tabby" Bundesen.

Online: <https://www.youtube.com/user/SevereAvoidance> and <https://www.facebook.com/TheOfficialGrumpyCat/>.

NALA CAT

Nala is a 5-year-old shelter cat, a Siamese and tabby mix who stands out as the most popular cat on Instagram with 2.6 million followers. She also has 1.8 million Facebook followers.

Varisiri Methachittiphan found her in 2010 as an orphaned kitten in an animal

shelter in Castaic, California and knew she was the one. Methachittiphan started posting photos of the feline with striped fur and big blue eyes and Nala's popularity exploded. She looks particularly fetching in hats.

Online: http://instagram.com/nala_cat and <https://www.youtube.com/user/iamnalacat>.

TOAST

Toast is a King Charles spaniel and puppy-mill rescue with a floppy pink tongue that hangs out of her mouth. She's also a celebrity, appearing in fashion shows and shoots, photographed wearing sunglasses and other accessories, and retweeted by the likes of Reese Witherspoon. She's probably best-known for her Instagram feed, toastmeetsworld.

On Jan. 13, Toast will marry a dog named Finn at a hotel in Manhattan. Donations to their wedding registry at www.zola.com/registry/toastandfinn will raise money to fight puppy mills and pay for care for needy animals.

Online: <https://www.instagram.com/toastmeetsworld/?hl=en>.

BEI BEI THE GIANT PANDA BABY

Bei Bei (BAY BAY) weighed just 4 ounces when he was born Aug. 22 at the National Zoo in Washington D.C. He was pink, hairless, blind and dependent on his mother Mei Xiang (may SHONG). Four months later, he weighs around 18 pounds and is a lively bundle of fur, muscles, claws and teeth.

Bei Bei's public debut is scheduled for mid-January, but fans can follow his every squirm and squeal online. There's a panda cam, Twitter feed, YouTube clips of everything from his first steps to his veterinary check-ups and more.

Online: <http://nationalzoo.si.edu/animals/webcams/giant-panda.cfm>.

PIZZA RAT

A video of a rat dragging an entire slice of pizza down the steps of a Manhattan subway station was posted on YouTube on Sept. 22. By the next morning it had been viewed more than 1.4 million times. By late December, the views exceeded 8.7 million. □

FOR SALE



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Another drop in energy stocks leads market lower

ALEX VEIGA
AP Business Writer

The latest downturn in crude oil prices put investors in a selling mood Wednesday, pulling U.S. stocks lower for the second time this week.

The market decline, which wiped out some of the gains from a rally the day

extending its losses for the year to nearly 40 percent.

"You have oil prices affecting the market negatively today," said Quincy Krosby, market strategist for Prudential Financial.

"You throw in exceedingly low volume and it's a recipe for skewing the market, in this case to the down-

Nasdaq is up about 7 percent, while the Dow is on track to end 2015 with a loss of 1.2 percent.

The major stock indexes headed lower from the get-go on Wednesday as investors tracked the latest swings in oil and natural gas prices.

Benchmark U.S. crude fell

Consol Energy shed 46 cents, or 5.6 percent, to \$7.78. Natural gas company Chesapeake Energy fell 18 cents, or 3.9 percent, to \$4.40.

In other energy trading in New York, wholesale gasoline fell 5 cents, or 3.6 percent, to \$1.23 a gallon, while heating oil declined 5 cents, or 4.5 percent, to \$1.079 a gallon.

Natural gas slumped 15.6 cents to \$2.214 per 1,000 cubic feet.

Traders found good reasons to bid up other stocks. Weight Watchers International vaulted 19 percent after announcing an advertising campaign featuring Oprah Winfrey, who owns a 10 percent stake in the company. The stock added \$3.68 to \$23.05.

In Europe, trading volumes were low on the last full day of the year ahead of the New Year's holiday. Many European markets will be open only for a half day on Dec. 31. Germany's DAX fell 1.1 percent, while France's CAC 40 lost 0.5 percent. Britain's FTSE 100 slipped 0.6 percent.

Precious and industrial metals prices ended mixed. Gold lost \$8.20 to \$1,059.80 an ounce, silver fell 9 cents to \$13.84 an ounce and copper gained 1 cent to \$2.15 a pound.

Bond prices edged higher. The yield on the 10-year Treasury note fell to 2.29 percent.

In currencies, the dollar rose to 120.55 yen from 120.39 yen late Tuesday. The euro slipped to \$1.0924 from \$1.0939. □



Trader Gregory Rowe, center, works on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange. The latest downturn in crude oil prices put investors in a selling mood Wednesday, pulling U.S. stocks lower for the second time this week.

(AP Photo/Richard Drew)

before, came on lighter-than-usual trading ahead of the New Year's Day holiday.

Energy companies fell the most among the 10 sectors in the Standard & Poor's 500 index, 1.5 percent. The sector is down 23.8 percent for the year. Southwestern Energy fell 6.8 percent, while Consol Energy sank 5.6 percent.

The price of oil shed 3.4 percent on Wednesday,

side."

The Dow Jones industrial average fell 117.11 points, or 0.7 percent, to 17,603.87. The S&P 500 index dropped 15 points, or 0.7 percent, to 2,063.36. The Nasdaq composite lost 42.09 points, or 0.8 percent, to 5,065.85.

The day's market action cut into the S&P 500's slim gain for the year.

The index remains essentially flat with an increase of 0.2 percent this year. The

\$1.27 to close at \$36.60 a barrel in New York. It's down 39 percent this year. Brent crude, which is used to price international oils, slid \$1.33, or 3.5 percent, to close at \$36.46 a barrel in London.

Several energy companies closed lower, including Noble Energy, which fell \$1.18, or 3.5 percent, to \$32.22, and Southwestern Energy, which tumbled 46 cents, or 6.8 percent, to \$6.30.

Pep Boys agrees to be bought by Icahn for \$1 billion

NEW YORK (AP) — Pep Boys will be acquired by Carl Icahn for \$1 billion, ending a weeks-long bidding war with the Japanese tire company Bridgestone.

The deal is expected to close in the first quarter of next year.

Icahn Enterprises offered \$18.50 in cash for each share of Pep Boys on Tues-

day, \$1.50 more per share than the most recent offer from Bridgestone.

With the contest becoming too rich, Bridgestone bowed a few hours later. Because Pep Boys had already agreed to a deal with Bridgestone Corp., Icahn Enterprises will pay a \$39.5 million break-up fee. Pep Boys - Manny, Moe & Jack, based in Philadel-

phia, operates more than 800 locations around the country that sell auto parts, fixes vehicles and offer other services. The company's tire business has been under pressure and it has looked for new ways to generate cash.

Icahn said in a statement that Pep Boys has "enormous growth potential." The activist investor said

he has been looking for a company to pair with Auto Plus, an auto parts distributor that Icahn Enterprises bought earlier this year. Shares of Pep Boys fell 57 cents, or 3 percent, to \$18.37 in morning trading Wednesday. Icahn Enterprises LP shares slipped 77 cents, or 1.3 percent, to \$60.75. □

Ride-hailing app company Sidecar stopping service

MARLEY JAY
AP Markets Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Delivery and ride-hailing pioneer Sidecar, which struggled to compete with bigger rivals Uber and Lyft, says it will stop offering services.

In a message posted to Medium, co-founders Sunil Paul and Jahan Khanna said Sidecar's rides and deliveries will end at 5 p.m. Eastern time on Thursday.

"Today is a turning point for Sidecar as we prepare to end our ride and delivery service so we can work on strategic alternatives and lay the groundwork for the next big thing," they wrote. The three-year-old San Francisco company's investors included Google Ventures and Richard Branson. While Uber Technologies says it's operating 68 countries and Lyft gives rides in 190 cities, Sidecar did business in just eight markets across the U.S. Paul and Khanna posted that Sidecar faced a "capital disadvantage."

Uber and Lyft have raised billions of dollars in funding, and along the way they have taken the lead in the ride-hailing market. Chinese taxi-hailing company Didi Kuaidi recently announced a partnership with Lyft. Apps for hailing rides have become a huge business in just a few years, but it's not clear how many companies will survive as the industry grows. Companies are grappling with new regulations and unionization pushes and other industries are trying to borrow some of their innovations. Since Sidecar was struggling to gain passengers, it tried to retool in August by focusing on business-to-business deliveries of food and products over giving rides.

Harry Campbell, who drives part-time for Lyft and Uber and blogs as The Rideshare Guy, said that distinction won't exist in a few years. Today Uber and Lyft mostly move passengers and Postmates only delivers food, but he thinks the companies will evolve into networks. □

KaloBios files for bankruptcy following Shkreli scandal

NEW YORK (AP) — KaloBios, the troubled drugmaker taken over by Martin Shkreli last month, is seeking bankruptcy protection less than two weeks after his arrest for securities fraud.

It is the second pharmaceutical with ties to the former hedge fund manager now in turmoil following his indictment on charges un-

related to his involvement with them, though the drugmakers are not lacking for problems of their own. The other,

Turing Pharmaceuticals Inc., is cutting jobs and seeking a new CEO after Shkreli resigned the position because of his arrest.

Turing, under Shkreli, acquired the rights to a treat-

ment for a rare parasitic infection that mainly strikes pregnant women and raised the price from \$13.50 to \$750 per pill. That shoved the New York company right into the crosshairs of lawmakers under pressure to do something about soaring drug prices.

Retail prices have surged 401 percent since 2009

for brand-name drugs for skin conditions, according to research published in JAMA Dermatology, a medical journal.

That compares with an overall inflation rate of just 11 percent during the same period.

A report published in May by the pharmacy-benefits company Express Scripts

found that 576,000 Americans spent at least \$50,000 on prescription drugs in 2014,

a sum roughly equivalent to the U.S. median household income.

An investigation by the Senate Special Committee on Aging is now focused on Turing and three other pharmaceutical companies. □

Apple agrees to pay \$350 million in Italian tax case

FRANCES D'EMILIO

Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Apple has agreed to pay Italy 318 million euros (about \$350 million) in taxes for several past years, prosecutors said Wednesday, part of a broader European effort to make multinationals pay what they owe in each country where they do business.

Italy has already brought several cases against global technology companies that have headquarters in low-tax nations like Ireland to avoid paying higher taxes in other countries, like Italy. The practice, called profit-shifting, has come under attack from the European Union, which wants multinationals to pay tax where they earn their revenue, and not where they have their regional base.

The EU's 28 states agreed in October to share details of tax deals they reach with big companies to make sure they are fair to other countries. The EU has already ordered Starbucks and Fiat to pay millions in back taxes to Luxembourg and the Netherlands, respectively.

Milan prosecutors on



A publicity billboard is seen in downtown Milan, Italy, Wednesday, Dec. 30, 2015. Italian authorities say Apple Italia has agreed to pay 318 million euros (about \$350 million) in taxes for several past years and is working out a deal to cover its future tax liabilities for its business in Italy.

(AP Photo/Antonio Calanni)

Wednesday confirmed a report in daily La Repubblica that Apple agreed to pay the sum for the years spanning 2008-2013. The prosecutors said Apple's tax liabilities for the five successive years will hinge on an international ruling on such cases. They declined to give details.

They also declined to discuss how payment of back taxes might affect a criminal probe, conducted by the prosecutors, into suspected tax evasion by three Apple employees. La Repubblica said two of the employees are executives based in Italy while the third is based in Ireland.

Apple offices in Milan, London and Ireland were closed on Wednesday. Messages seeking comment weren't immediately answered.

Apple CEO Tim Cook has repeatedly rejected the notion that his company is trying to dodge taxes. In an interview with CBS TV

program 60 Minutes aired Dec. 20, he said: "Apple pays every tax dollar we owe." Independent tax expert Bob Willens said the fact that Apple settled with Italian tax authorities means they're conceding there was something a bit off in the company's European tax arrangements.

"I don't think Apple would have agreed to this sanction if they didn't feel there was something at least questionable in what they were doing," Willens said.

He said that while the sum was just a "nuisance" for Apple, the case did create a reputational problem: "It's not a very positive public relations thing to be branded a serial tax avoider."

Italian state television said the 318 million euros worked out in the agreement is far less than what Italian tax authorities contend should have been paid over those years.

Italian tax authorities have also examined Facebook's Milan offices' books. In yet another investigation, Google has said it has been working with Italian tax authorities to determine what it might owe. □

Weight Watchers stock soars as Oprah ad begins to air

NEW YORK (AP) — Weight Watchers is getting another boost from Oprah Winfrey. The weight loss company's shares are soaring as a TV commercial starring Winfrey begins to air.

The commercial shows past videos of Winfrey working out and referencing her struggle with weight, a frequent topic of Winfrey's for-

mer talk show. The ad ends with Winfrey asking viewers if they're ready to join her. "Let's do this together," she says.

She tweeted the ad to her more than 30 million followers on Tuesday.

Weight Watchers stock has more than tripled since October when Winfrey bought a 10 percent stake in the

New York company. Besides the new ads, Weight Watchers has also made changes to its plans to better fit in with Winfrey's message of living a healthy and happier life and not just focusing on weight loss.

Shares of Weight Watchers International Inc. jumped \$3.96, or 20 percent, to \$23.33 in afternoon trading

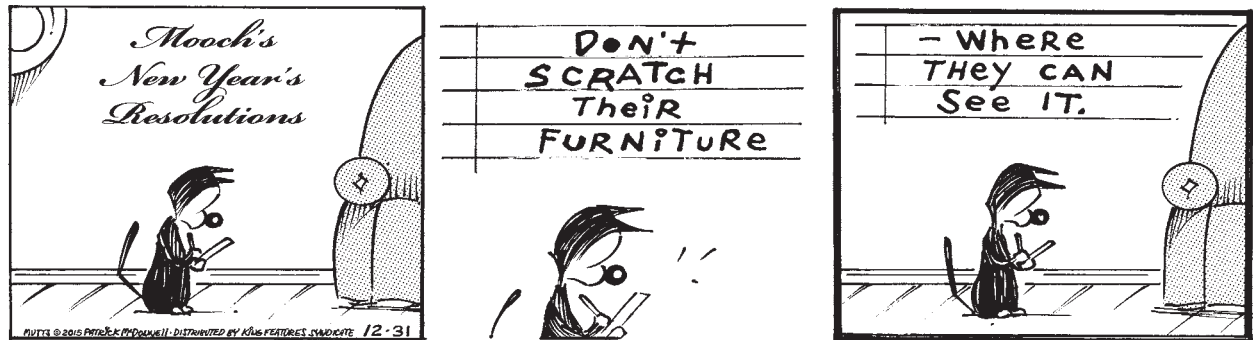
Wednesday.

Weight Watchers brought in Winfrey at a precarious time for the company. It has been hurt by the popularity of fitness trackers and free food-tracking apps. Despite recent gains in the stock, it is still down about 7 percent from a year ago. Winfrey is on the new plan and she said in an October

appearance on "The Ellen DeGeneres Show" that she lost 15 pounds in a few months.

While she slims down, her wallet is getting fatter. Back in October, Winfrey paid about \$43.2 million for her 10 percent stake in Weight Watchers. That stake is now worth more than \$148 million. □

Mutts



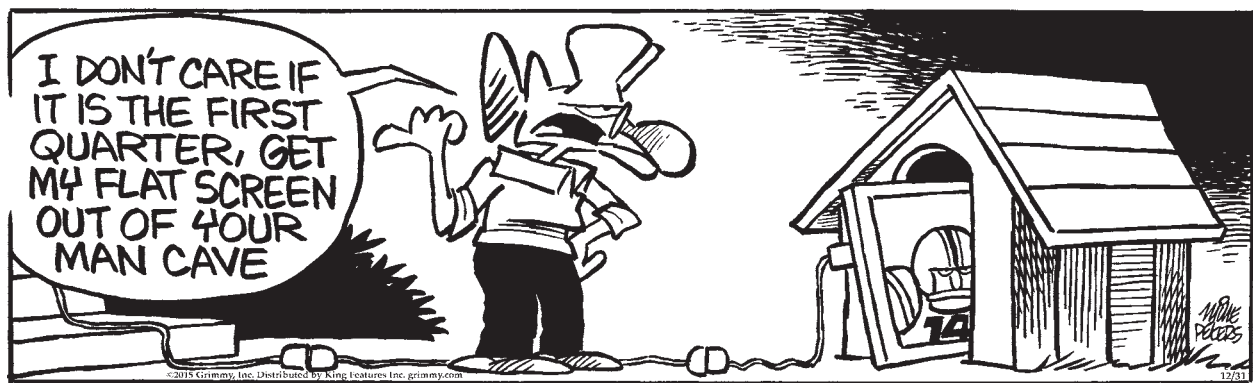
6 Chix



Blondie



Mother Goose & Grimm



Baby Blues



Zits



Conceptis Sudoku

		1		2			9
4		5				8	
2			4				3
				4			5
		4			2		
6			3				
8				9			7
	6			7		9	
5			6		1		

Difficulty Level ★★★ 12/31

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Sunday.

Yesterday's puzzle answer

8	4	6	5	3	7	2	1	9
7	5	2	1	9	6	4	8	3
9	3	1	2	8	4	5	6	7
6	7	4	3	2	5	8	9	1
1	2	5	9	6	8	3	7	4
3	9	8	7	4	1	6	2	5
5	6	7	8	1	3	9	4	2
2	8	3	4	7	9	1	5	6
4	1	9	6	5	2	7	3	8

ACROSS

- 1 That girl
4 Locality
9 Alda TV series
13 Currier and __; printmakers
15 Of the kidneys
16 Reverberate
17 Window glass
18 Set free
19 Gangster
20 Leaving high and dry
22 Laying birds
23 Pennsylvania and Fifth: abbr.
24 Not long __; recently
26 Idiotic
29 Traitor Arnold
34 Ready for battle
35 Stretch of land
36 Argument
37 Pokes
38 Hotel booking for a large family, perhaps
39 Hurricane wind
40 Part of a royal flush
41 Bumpkins
42 Ms. Midler
43 Scarf
45 Most rational
46 Scorching
47 Actor Wilder
48 __ long way to Tipperary...
51 First to attack
56 Hairdo
57 Blossom
58 Family restaurant
60 Qualified
61 Depart
62 Storage tower
63 Trawlers' gear
64 Finished
65 Ancient

DOWN

- 1 Stylish
2 Perón & Gabor
3 Monthly expense
4 Trimmed, as branches

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13			14						16		
17				18					19		
	20			21					22		
			23				24	25			
26	27	28				29	30		31	32	33
34				35					36		
37				38					39		
40				41				42			
43		44					45				
		46				47					
48	49	50		51	52	53			54	55	
56				57				58		59	
60				61				62			
63				64				65			

Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews

12/31/15

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

SUMO	MOVES	SLAM
OPEN	AGILE	TOBE
MODE	TRAITOROUS	
END	DUEL	MINTS
	LIARS	DEC
SVELTE	RANTED	
AISLE	KNOBS	VIM
MOOS	FEATS	HERO
ELM	PLEBE	CONGO
	AERIAL	BANTER
	ELK	HAIKU
CACAO	BORN	ACT
EXULTATION	BLUE	
DELL	DRAPE	BLTS
ESPY	SASSY	CYST

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12/31/15

- 41 Sorority letter
42 Prohibits
44 Rubs enough to make sore
45 __ like; appeared to be
47 Orchard
48 " __ See Clearly Now"
- 49 Bride __; fiancée
50 Gritty residue
52 Narrow valley
53 Spur on
54 Cincinnati, __
55 Bread tray item
59 Pea casing

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wk 49	room 2571	\$3,750
wk 48	room 517	\$3,750
wk 48 or 49	room 119	\$4,750
wk 48 or 49	room 551	\$5,500
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wk 21 or 22	room 347	\$4,000
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‘Millennium physicist’ ready to take helm at nuclear center



Fabiola Gianotti attends a news conference at the European Center for Nuclear Research, CERN, in Meyrin near Geneva, Switzerland. On Jan. 1, 2016 the 55-year-old Italian becomes the first woman director-general at CERN the world's biggest particle accelerator that smashes together atoms and monitors the fallout to help understand the universe at the most infinitesimal scale.

(Salvatore Di Nolfi/Keystone via AP)

JAMEY KEATEN

Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — Fabiola Gianotti, who this week takes the helm at CERN — home to world's largest particle accelerator, is seen as a new breed of scientist. Initially trained in arts and literature, she came to physics relatively late. She enjoys cooking, jogging, music and keeping her eye on the news, and notes the importance of being “a citizen of the world.” Gianotti “embodies for me what's much more the millennium physicist,” said Dr. Monica Dunford, senior scientist at Germany's University of Heidelberg, who spent six years at CERN, the European Center for Nuclear Research. “Not so geeky, much more well-rounded, diverse, passionate.”

“Fabiola brings freshness

to science: She's incredibly energetic, incredibly passionate, has a lot of different talents. ... She has a degree in piano in addition to physics,” Dunford said. Gianotti, who succeeds Germany's Rolf Heuer as director-general on Jan. 1, becoming the first woman to hold the post, insists she doesn't want to be “front stage” at the multinational laboratory on the Swiss-French border: Her bigger focus is about helping produce science for science's sake in the quest to explain the how the universe works.

The 55-year-old Italian stands out not just for her fashion sense in a sneakers-and-jeans culture of coffee-fueled collaboration, sleepless nights and absent-mindedness about proper eating. In an interview held in a CERN conference room because her

office was a “mess” during her move, Gianotti mused about an innovative, democratic community where Nobel laureates lunch with 25-year-old Ph.D. students. “CERN is a special place where we do fund research by bringing together experts from over the planet — great scientists — but also a huge amount of young people,” she said. It's “a democratic environment in that there are no barriers.”

The center's particle accelerator smashes together atoms and monitors the results to help understand the universe on the most infinitesimal scale. The Large Hadron Collider sends protons whizzing through a circular, 27-kilometer (17-mile) underground tunnel at nearly the speed of light. □

Team of Guam students build underwater robots

HAGATNA, Guam (AP) — A group of students in Guam is learning about the connection between marine robotics and environmental sustainability by creating their own underwater robots.

The group of 20 students, ages 15 to 17, is participating in a two-week sustainable technologies clinic put on by Guam Community College.

The students tested their homemade robots last week at an aquarium in Tumon, The Pacific Daily News reported.

“I'm teaching them about marine sustainability and not just teaching them why corals are important, but teaching them, ‘Hey, there's a job out there,’” said the program's director A.J. Sunga, a science professor at the college. “You could build robots to survey

the land.

You can build robots to search and rescue someone. You can build robots to do the science and help in sustainability.”

The robotics course is part of a six-day clinic on sustainable technologies. Students learn about sustainable design concepts for fossil fuels, photovoltaics and wind energy.

Sunga led students as they drew up their own blueprints, cut PVC pipe and worked with a motor and control to make the robots. “All I did was give them motors and a control, and I gave them uncut PVC pipe,” Sunga said. “Then I said, ‘OK, let's go and start cutting.’”

Students worked on the robots in groups of four and after one full day of designing and building, they tested their models in a swim-

ming pool. On Wednesday, the students headed to Underwater World to put their creations to the test in an underwater obstacle course at the tunnel aquarium.

One team, called H2O, used a three-blade propeller, motor and floats to keep their robot buoyant enough to move along the course.

“The simplicity really helped the buoyancy,” said Fredlyn Rose Lumogda, a member of the team and senior at Tiyan High School. “If it were any more complex, it would have just sunk.”

Each team was timed as they guided their robots between small yellow buoys at varying depths. A few teams made it through the entire course, but design flaws prevented some robots from getting past the first few obstacles. □

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Kings of Leon usher in 2016 with fireworks and new music

KRISTIN M. HALL
Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) —

The Kings of Leon took it easy this year after finishing up their international tour for their 2013 album "Mechanical Bull," but the Grammy-winning family rock group is ready to start 2016 with a bang, literally. They are headlining the New Year's Eve celebrations in downtown Nashville, Tennessee, where they've made their home for 15 years. The festivities will include a giant musical note dropping at the stroke of midnight, fireworks and performances by Grammy-nominated country singer Chris Stapleton, Kelsea Ballerini, Sugar & The Hi-Lows, The Whigs, Wild Cub and LANco.

Singer Caleb Followill and drummer Nathan Followill talked to The Associated Press about drinking on New Year's Eve, resolutions and working on a new album for 2016. The answers have been edited for brevity and clarity.

AP: What does 2016 look like for you?

Nathan: We've already started pre-production in our studio for the next record, but the main thing on the calendar for 2016 is getting the record finished. And then the whole press machine kicks up and doing press for the record.

Caleb: We enjoy this part of the process. Obviously there's a lot of work that goes into it and it can get stressful at times, but we're all in a good place and we're having fun with it and we're all excited to do something new.

AP: Are you going to split the recording between Nashville and Los Angeles?

Caleb: We might just try to get a little change of scenery. Our first two albums we recorded in L.A., so we're going to try to go back and see if it inspires us. If it doesn't, we always have a studio at home, so we can always come back.

AP: What's your experience playing on New Year's Eve?

Caleb: We've done it before where you're playing

From left, Matthew Followill, Jared Followill, Nathan Followill and Caleb Followill of the band Kings of Leon, pose for photographers in Amsterdam, Netherlands. The Kings of Leon took it easy this year after finishing up their international tour for their 2013 album "Mechanical Bull," but the Grammy-winning family rock group is ready to start 2016 with a bang, literally. They are headlining the New Year's Eve celebrations in downtown Nashville, Tenn., where they've made their home for 15 years.

(Joel Ryan/Invision/AP)

for someone and at times it feels like you're just background music, or the house band. The setting is always nice, but it just doesn't feel right. That's why we wanted to do this. We wanted to play a show where we could go up there and people are going to be there for a good time and not walking around eating sushi.

AP: What's the secret for a great New Year's Eve set list?

Nathan: You want to have a nice mixture in there. But we're all realists and not all 150,000 people or how many people are there are like die-hard Kings of Leon fans. You gotta play songs that everyone will know, throw a cover or two in there so that they know that as well. But then we have to keep it fun for us as well. That's the three parts to the show. AP: So when do you get to celebrate the New Year? Caleb: So I decided I am not going to have a drink until next year. So I am patiently waiting. So we'll do our set and they will have the big fireworks and then we'll come back and do another half hour or so. And that last half hour, we'll probably be a little fuzzy cause as soon as we do the countdown, I am starting to drink.

AP: What are your New Year's resolutions?

Nathan: To not eat my feelings and to lose some weight. 2016 is going to be fun with the new record and all that. I am sure some of us are probably going to grow our families. Some of us will not. 2016 is going to be a good year, I



got a feeling.

Caleb: I am just looking forward to enjoying what

we are doing a little more, not getting overwhelmed by the moments that are

overwhelming and just kinda enjoy it. And try to be a better me. □



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Wednesday
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Sunday
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by ANNIA
8:00 PM



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Looks easy, isn't: Lots of work goes into New Year's Concert

GEORGE JAHN
Associated Press

VIENNA (AP) — One, two, three, one, two, three. A Strauss waltz is a musical cinch, right? Not even for the members of one of the world's best orchestras. Listening in to the final rehearsal of the Vienna Philharmonic's annual New Year's concert quickly reveals that lots of work goes into the final product of what is

the world's most-watched classical music event of the year. "It's very, very difficult," said Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra chairman and violinist Andreas Grossbauer ahead of Friday's big event. "Take the 'Blue Danube' waltz for instance. To create beautiful phrases here, these are really difficult things." The effort that goes into each concert is as well



Latvian conductor Mariss Jansons listens during an interview with The Associated Press in Vienna, Austria. Jansons will conduct the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra for the traditional New Year's concert on Friday, Jan. 1, 2016 at the Musikverein in Vienna. The effort that goes into each concert is as well hidden to the more than 50 million people tuning in from nearly 100 countries worldwide. It was originally a morale booster staged by the Nazis to draw attention away from a losing war.

(AP Photo/Ronald Zak)

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WITH SPANISH SUBTITLES
MON-FRI 3:50 | 6:20 | 9:15
SAT, SUN & HOL 3:15 | 6:20 | 9:15

POINT BREAK
WITH SPANISH SUBTITLES
MON-THURS 4:30 | 7:00 | 9:35
FRI 4:30 | 7:00 | 9:35 | 12:05
SAT 2:00 | 4:30 | 7:00 | 9:35 | 12:05
SUN & HOL 2:00 | 4:30 | 7:00 | 9:35

DADDY'S HOME
WITH SPANISH SUBTITLES
MON-THURS 5:00 | 7:15 | 9:30
FRI 5:00 | 7:15 | 9:30 | 11:45
SAT 2:45 | 5:00 | 7:15 | 9:30 | 11:45
SUN & HOL 2:45 | 5:00 | 7:15 | 9:30

LOS DOMINQUENOS
SPANISH VERSION
MON-THURS 4:20 | 6:50 | 9:20
FRI 4:20 | 6:50 | 9:20 | 11:50
SAT 1:50 | 4:20 | 6:50 | 9:20 | 11:50
SUN & HOL 1:50 | 4:20 | 6:50 | 9:20

THE BIG SHORT
WITH SPANISH SUBTITLES
MON-FRI 6:45
SAT, SUN & HOL 1:45 | 6:45

CONCUSSION
WITH SPANISH SUBTITLES
MON-THURS 9:00
FRI-SAT 9:00 | 11:40
SUN & HOL 9:00

ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS ROAD CHIP
WITH SPANISH SUBTITLES
MON-THURS 4:30 | 6:40 | 8:50
FRI 4:30 | 6:40 | 8:50 | 11:00
SAT 2:20 | 4:30 | 6:40 | 8:50 | 11:00
SUN & HOL 2:20 | 4:30 | 6:40 | 8:50

STAR WARS
THE FORCE AWAKENS
WITH SPANISH SUBTITLES
MON-THURS 4:50 | 7:45
FRI 4:50 | 7:45 | 10:40
SAT 1:55 | 4:50 | 7:45 | 10:40
SUN & HOL 1:55 | 4:50 | 7:45

SISTERS
WITH SPANISH SUBTITLES
MON-THURS 4:20 | 9:25
FRI-SAT 4:20 | 9:25 | 12:05
SUN & HOL 4:20 | 9:25

THE GOOD DINOSAUR
WITH SPANISH SUBTITLES
MON-FRI 4:30 | 6:45
SAT, SUN & HOL 2:15 | 4:30 | 6:45

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hidden to the more than 50 million people tuning in from nearly 100 countries worldwide as the dark origins of the event. It was originally a morale booster staged by the Nazis to draw attention away from a losing war.

But now, as then, the music from the Strauss dynasty and their contemporaries is lilting. And the visuals have evolved.

The floral arrangements are spectacular, TV audiences are treated to ballet segments and stunning Vienna vistas, while the gilt Musikverein concert hall is the perfect venue

for a slickly staged experience that can cost more than 1,000 euros (more than \$1,000) for those lucky enough to get a ticket. But it's a tough slog to get there.

For three hours this week, musicians clad in jeans and T-shirts instead of their concert finery repeatedly went over passages during their final rehearsal. Conductor Mariss Jansons was jovial but firm as he cajoled them to do it just a little better each time — more piano here, a smoother passage elsewhere.

He and orchestra members picked each of the

18 pieces from an original list of 800. Even the traditionally comic segments needed honing. Blaring into a plastic horn to emit a discordant triad, Jansons asked repeatedly "can you hear?" before putting down the toy and picking up his baton. Relaxing after rehearsal, the Latvian maestro also took issue with the idea that "light" music is light work.

"It's not easy when you take it seriously and want to conduct a very high-class concert," he said. "You must have a very special relationship to this music." □

San Francisco investigating Bieber graffiti

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — San Francisco's city attorney is demanding that Justin Bieber's music publisher help determine who is responsible for sidewalk graffiti promoting the pop star's latest album.

City attorney Dennis Herrera sent a letter to Universal Music Group earlier in the week, saying the graffiti appears to have been applied with spray paint that has not come off even after recent rainstorms. That contrasts with other recent sidewalk marketing campaigns that have

used chalk, according to Herrera. Herrera said public works crews have removed some of the graffiti at great expense, although he did not provide a figure. The city attorney's office released photographs of eight instances of the graffiti and asked for Universal's help in determining its full scope. Emails seeking comment from representatives of Universal Music Group were not immediately returned. The graffiti promoting Bieber's new album, "Purpose," has been found in Haight-Ashbury

and other neighborhoods. City officials have received complaints about it, Herrera said.

"This prohibited marketing practice illegally exploits our city's walkable neighborhoods and robust tourism, intentionally creates visual distractions that pose risks to pedestrians on busy rights of way, and irresponsibly tells our youth that likeminded lawlessness and contempt for public property are condoned and encouraged by its beneficiaries," Herrera said in his letter. □

A cartoon series brings laughs to raging immigration debate

FRAZIER MOORE
AP Television Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Let's get one thing straight: Donald Trump is not a consultant to "Bordertown."

To be sure, this new Fox animated comedy does target issues like immigration, the drug war and the embattled American Dream. But it's been in development since 2007, long before the furor sparked by Trump upon his entry last June into the presidential race.

The series' premiere (Sunday, 9:30 p.m. EST) deals with a toughest-in-the-nation anti-immigration bill passed by Mexifornia, the U.S. desert community where "Bordertown" is set. The second episode, airing Jan. 10, is about the construction of a border wall meant to protect Mexifornia from undesirables from down Mexico way.

"It's about time we did something about immigration! The Southwest belongs to retired art teachers and meth-lab entrepreneurs," roars Bud Buckwald, a dunderheaded Border Patrol guard who fears his American Dream is slipping away in an America where ethnic minorities are projected to become the majority within a few years. After all, next door to Bud and his family reside the Gonzalezes, whose genial patriarch, Ernesto, has a thriving landscape business after less than a decade settled in the U.S.

According to creator Mark Hentemann, "Bordertown" began as a modern-day

update of Archie Bunker, the apoplectic working man from the pioneering 1970s sitcom "All in the Family." Like Archie, Bud is "a white guy who feels he's losing his place in the world. He's contrasted with an immigrant who's building a life for himself in the United States."

Growing up in Cleveland, Hentemann was inculcated with a version of the immigration story by his father.

"Every time he had a glass of wine, he would tell my siblings and me how his dad came over from Germany in the '20s with nothing, seeking a better life, working three jobs," Hentemann recalls. "It was his way to communicate the values he wanted us to embrace, and not take for granted what we have."

"Every family has their immigration story somewhere back through the decades," he says. "That's what compelled me to write about this. This show seemed to be an opportunity to do a smart cultural satire."

Even as the broader themes felt second nature to him, Hentemann did not wish to perpetuate stereotypes, so he brought in a team that included Latino writers.

Among them: Lalo Alcaraz, creator of the Latino comic strip, "La Cucaracha," who brings to the show informed details (like Latino men's huge belt buckles and the practice of Christmas lights strewn year-round outside Latino homes). He regards

the show's characters not as stereotypes, but as archetypes.

"My own dad was a gardener and I gardened with him on Saturdays,"

met for me, man! The stars aligned!"

Alcaraz co-wrote the "Borderwall" episode with Hentemann more than a year ago. Their hero, Bud,

"He went even further than WE did," adds Alcaraz with a laugh. "He said, 'The MEXICANS are gonna pay for MY border wall!'"

Reflecting his recent stint



This photo provided by FOX shows Bud Buckwald, left, with his Border Patrol colleagues on the series premiere of "Bordertown," airing Sunday, Jan. 3, 2016, at 9:30 p.m. ET/PT on FOX.

(Fox via AP)

says Alcaraz. "My mother cleaned houses for middle-class white people in San Diego. I'm from that background."

Alcaraz went on to earn a master's degree in architecture at the University of California at Berkeley, where he found his comic voice reflecting his experience growing up.

Now he describes the arrival of "Bordertown" — framing the immigrant experience in terms he was born to lampoon — as "Kis-

proposes the wall be paid for with confiscated drug money. But it works too well, destroying the local economy and leaving Bud jobless.

"At the time I remember worrying that all the furor over border walls had kind of faded," says Hentemann. "Was this going to feel old hat when we aired it? Then a few months later Donald Trump announced his candidacy and brought it roaring back into the national conversation."

running "Family Guy" (and the role of "Family Guy" mastermind Seth MacFarlane as an executive producer), Hentemann's new show takes plenty of shots at pop culture, including Bud's 5-year-old daughter (a chubby beauty-pageant veteran who picks up where Honey Boo Boo left off) as well as the threat of interplanetary aliens, visions of the Virgin Mary, Philip Seymour Hoffman's drug overdose and the WNBA. □

Reruns and sports: last week's most-watched gifts to viewers

FRAZIER MOORE
AP Television Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Football and reruns prevailed on television Christmas week, according to the Nielsen ratings company.

NBC's Sunday night clash between the New York Giants and the Minnesota Vikings claimed the lead with almost 18 million viewers.

But CBS was not to be outdone with its slate of encore dramas and com-

edies (a trio of repeats of "The Big Bang Theory" made it into the Top 20), along with such popular holiday fare as an Andy Griffith special and a colorized hour of classic "I Love Lucy." For the week, CBS led in prime time with an average 5.7 million viewers.

Not so successful: ABC's four-episode block of "Muppets" reruns on Sunday, the first of which drew a puny 1.9 million viewers,

and the final half-hour attracting a Scrooge-like 955,000.

NBC, in second place for the week, averaged 5.3 million viewers, while ABC had 3.6 million, Fox had 3.1 million, Univision had 1.7 million, Telemundo had 1.4 million, ION Television had 1.3 million, and the CW had 1.1 million.

ESPN was by far the week's leading cable network, averaging 3.37 million viewers in prime time. USA had

2.30 million, and ABC Family had 2.21 million viewers. NBC's "Nightly News" topped the evening newscasts with an average of 9.3 million viewers. ABC's "World News Tonight" was second with 8.7 million and the "CBS Evening News" had 7.5 million viewers.

For the week of Dec. 21-27, the top 10 shows, their networks and viewerships: NFL Football: New York Giants at Minnesota, NBC, 17.87 million; "Sunday Night NFL

Pre-Kick," NBC, 14.22 million; "The OT," Fox, 13.09 million; NFL Football: Detroit at New Orleans, ESPN, 10.90 million; "NCIS," CBS, 10.80 million; "Football Night in America," NBC, 10.67 million; "60 Minutes Presents," CBS, 10.54 million; "The Big Bang Theory" (Monday, 8:30 p.m.), CBS, 8.52 million; "The Big Bang Theory" (Monday, 8 p.m.), CBS, 8.42 million; "NCIS: New Orleans," CBS, 8.20 million. □

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